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Subject: Tone of open letter and a proposal
Date: Wed, 10 Jan 2001 08:36:01 -0800
X-Priority: 3

I'm sorry to be stubborn here, but, responding to Michael and Rich's letters:

We can quibble about word choice, but I just don't see how we could have written an effective letter that didn't end up being perceived as threatening by some journals. Although the bulk of the letter is a positive statement about where we want to see scientific publishing move in the future, it was absolutely essential that the letter state a specific set of actions the signers would take in order to make this vision become a reality. Lets all remember that the journals' responses to PMC have generally ranged from unenthusiastic to hostile. I don't think the journals have been lined up at David's door begging to be let in. They have, for the most part, acted as if they alone would decide if and when they would join PMC. The scientific community had to make it clear that we wanted them to do it, and we wanted them to do it as soon as possible. In my opinion, the letter has already been a success by placing this matter back on the table and prodding the journals to take some action.

One small but important point in response to the letter Michael Ashburner sent regarding EMBO. The letter explicitly states that journals should have AGREED to the policy we advocate by September 1. We understand that it may take longer for them to actually implement it.

The one area in which I think the letter does have problems is in its clarity. I have heard few complain about the letter's tone, but far more complain that they don't exactly understand for what the letter is asking. Pat and I tried to clarify this issue in the FAQ, but people don't seem to be reading it. It might help a little to reword the open letter, but I really think this would be a tremendous headache both practically (we would be obliged to recollect the signature of all 700 people who have signed the letter) and from a perception standpoint as I fear it would send a message of confusion on our part to signers, potential signers and the journals.

As a solution to this and to the problem of the journals perception of the tone of the letter, I would like to propose that we as a group build on the letter Rich circulated for Science and Nature and carefully craft a very positively worded statement that clearly and in more detail articulates to what we would like the journals to agree and how we think the publishers and scientists can work together to make sure this is achieved without threatening the existence of the journals. We should address the major concerns raised by the publishers in a positive way and try to convince them not that we don't care about their future but rather that we believe their fears will not be realized. We should make this statement the first thing people see when they come to the website and also send it to all of the journals. I think we should do this as soon as possible.

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